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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses a survey undertaken to determine how children of different sexes and of different religious/ethnic groups in the Middle East form political attitudes. In this survey, special emphasis was placed on the rate of development of the assumed political attitudes, the age and grade level of the emergence of clear political preferences, variations between ethnic and religious groups in rate of development, and sex differences. The hypothesis was that flags would be symbolic of political attitudes because they are important indicators of identification with political, religious, and social causes. The sample consisted of 1,541 males and females (ages seven through 18) in Israel and the West Bank. The group represented Christians, Moslems, nonorthodox Jews, and Orthodox Jews (Israel); and Christians and Moslems (West Bank). The survey was based on projective responses to questions about the attractiveness of 20 flags in four categories--flags of Israel and her neighbors, other Middle Eastern countries, world powers with important concerns in the Middle East, and other countries not strongly identified with the Middle East. Students were directed to pick the most attractive flag, then the next most attractive, until all flags were chosen. Findings indicated that all children had a fairly sophisticated judgment of key flags by the age of seven, Israeli Christians differentiated flags early but changed preferences as they became older, Jewish children tended to develop flag sophistication somewhat earlier than average, West Bank children tended to develop this sophistication somewhat later, and sex differences were greatest among Jews. The conclusion is that political attitudes can be measured by a projective instrument such as the flag scale. (DB)

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Political Socialization in Israel and the West Bank

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Political Socialization in Israel and the West Bank

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Abstract

To evaluate developmental patterns of similarity and difference in attitude toward world powers as well as their own ethnic/religious group 1541 boys and girls from kindergarten through Grade 12 gave responses to a projective test of flag preference. The groups in Israel represented: Christians, Moslems, non-Orthodox Jews, and Orthodox Jews; on the West Bank: Christians and Moslems. Factors of ethnicity, religion, sex, and grade level showed somewhat anticipated rankings of key countries (Israel, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States) but also differences in the rate of development. Thus, while all children had a fairly sophisticated judgment of key flags by Grade 2, Jewish children tended to have developed this sophistication somewhat earlier, at the kindergarten level. Judgments of West Bank children on the key flags tended to be opposite that of the Jewish children and to be developed a bit later. An unanticipated result was that postprimary Jewish males preferred the U.S. flag to that of Israel.

Political Socialization in Israel and the West Bank

Political attitudes of children are themselves interesting and also because they can possibly predict future behavior. Flags through history have been important symbols for the great emotions of identification with political, religious, and social causes (Doob, 1964, pp. 33-34; Smith, 1975; Weitman, 1973). Horowitz (1941) showed that development of patriotism could be related to preference of one's own national flag to that of other nations. Weinstein (1957) related development of the sense of national identity through attitudes toward the flag. A flag scale developed by Lawson (1963) used children's preferences of a country's flag to measure attitudes toward that country. Lawson and Stagner (1957) had earlier given evidence that flag ratings correlated significantly with a verbal scale of nationalism.

American children ranked the U.S. flag as the most beautiful (Horowitz, 1941; Lawson, 1963; Greenberg, 1969; Garcia, 1973; Statt, 1973); Canadian children ranked theirs (and the Union Jack) as most attractive (Lawson, 1965; Statt, 1973). In Israel Lawson (1975) showed that Jewish children preferred the Israeli flag; Arab Christian children, the Lebanese; Arab Moslem children, the Saudi Arabian. For the combined Israeli Arab Christian and Moslem children the top three flags were Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.

On the West Bank Lawson (1977) showed that responses were almost mirror-image those of the Jewish children in Israel (Lawson, 1975). West Bank children showed clear preference for Saudi Arabia and Russia; rejection of Israel and the U.S.

The previous investigations in Israel and the West Bank focused on (1) differences between the various ethnic and religious groups within Israel (Lawson, 1975), and (2) differences between Arab groups within Israel and those on the West Bank (Lawson, 1977). One disadvantage of cross-sectional analysis is that group data may conceal important information such as differences in trend. In this case, questions were raised concerning the rate of development of the assumed political attitudes. Further questions involve the age and grade level of the emergence of clear political preferences, variations between ethnic and religious groups in rate of development, and sex differences.

The purpose of this investigation was to answer these questions. Additional data from kindergarten groups were brought in. Then analyses were done by grade level and sex as well as by ethnicity, religion, and location to identify developmental trends of major groups in Israel and on the West Bank toward key political powers as shown by a projective test.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were from Israel and the West Bank and were classified into six major groups. In Israel these were:

Arab Christians, Arab Moslems, Jewish non-Orthodox, and Jewish Orthodox; on the West Bank: Christians and Moslems. The Arab children in Israel attended government and private schools in the Lod-Ramla-Jaffa area. The Jewish children were from regular government schools (for the non-Orthodox) and government religious schools (for the Orthodox) in the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv areas. The Jewish schools were carefully selected to give a balance between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews.

The Arab children on the West Bank were from the two communities of Ramallah and El Bireh. They attended government and private schools. From each of the six religious/ethnic/location groups there were as far as possible 20 boys and 20 girls from kindergarten, Grades 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12. There were some difficulties in fulfilling the quotas in Grades 10 and 12 especially with Arab children. The total sample was 1541.

Testing Instrument

The materials followed that of Lawson (1963). Twenty flags from the flag chart of the U.N. Office of Public Information were used. The flags were approximately 2.8 x 4 cm. and were mounted on gray rectangles 4.2 x 6 cm. The U.N. flag was reduced in size to be equal to the others. There were no labels on the flags. The flags were in four categories: (1) Israel and her direct Arab neighbors: Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, (2) other Middle Eastern countries: Greece, Turkey, and Iran, (3) world powers with important concerns in the Middle East: France, Great Britain, Russia, United

States, and the United Nations, and (4) other countries not strongly identified with the Middle East: Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Guatamala, Japan, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Procedure

The 20 flags were presented randomly in a matrix five across and four down. Each subject was interviewed separately at school (usually two interviewers were able to work simultaneously in an empty classroom) and asked to pick the most attractive flag, then the next most attractive, then the next, until all of the flags had been chosen, removed from the matrix and their rank recorded. Each child was interviewed by a person in his/her own ethnic group in the appropriate language: Arabic for the Arabs, Hebrew for the Jews. In their introduction the interviewers did not indicate who was sponsoring the research, merely that it had the approval of school officials. The instructions given by the interviewers were:

> Here are a number of flags. Pick out the one you think is the prettiest (most beautiful). You are to choose the flag on the basis of beauty alone rather than what it might stand for. There are no choices that are right or wrong. We expect that people will be different.

In actual practice, children in the lowest three grade levels were simply asked to pick the prettiest flag. Some children (mostly postprimary) asked questions such as what was

meant by "beautiful." They were instructed to use their own personal standard of beauty. Another question concerned inability to identify the flags. Here the child was reassured that what was wanted was a reaction to the flags themselves rather than what they might represent.

Results

The rank of each flag was recorded from one to twenty for each subject. The most preferred flag had a score of one, the least preferred twenty. As mentioned above, analyses had been done previously to show overall differences between the various groups (Lawson, 1975, 1977). However, since this analysis emphasizes developmental trends, averages were computed for each group for each flag by grade level and by sex. Four flags, Israel, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States were selected because they showed the most variation in average ranking between the responding groups and because of the great interest in attitudes toward those countries. Rather than showing all of the graphs possible, groups were combined whose averages (and profiles) were essentially similar. Thus, Figure 1 shows combined Israeli Moslem Boys and Girls. Figure 2 shows the combined

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Please insert Figures 1-5 about here

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averages of Israeli Christian children (boys and girls).

Figure 3, Jewish Boys from regular and religious schools; Fig-
Figure 4, Jewish Girls from regular and religious schools,
Figure 5, all Arab children on the West Bank (Christian, Moslem,

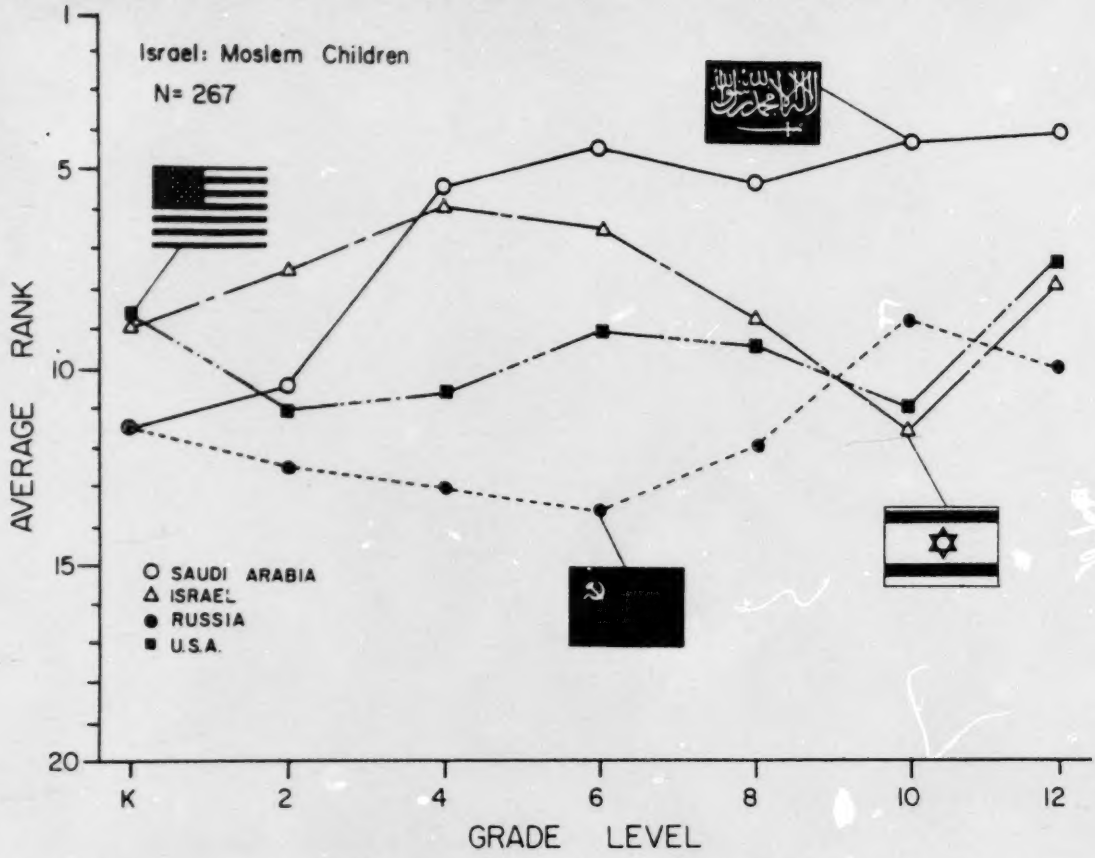

FIG. 1 Average rankings of Arab Moslem children in Israel.

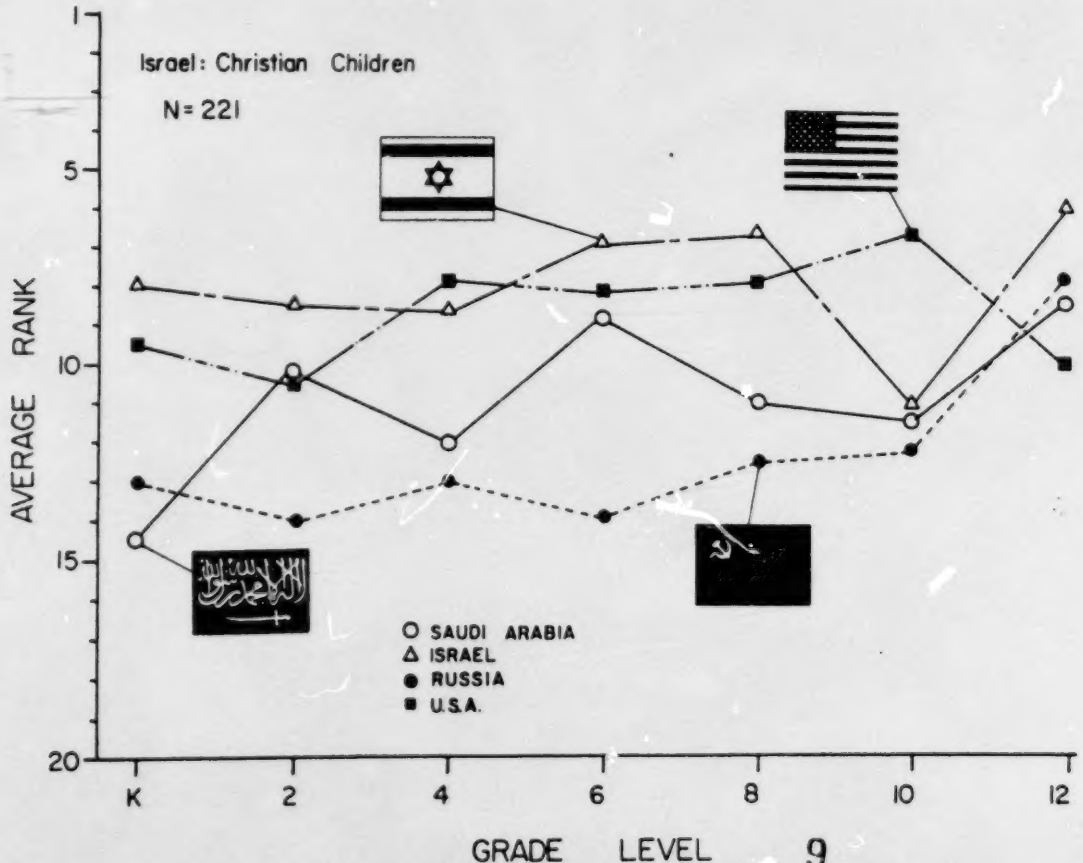

FIG. 2 Average rankings of Arab Christian children in Israel.

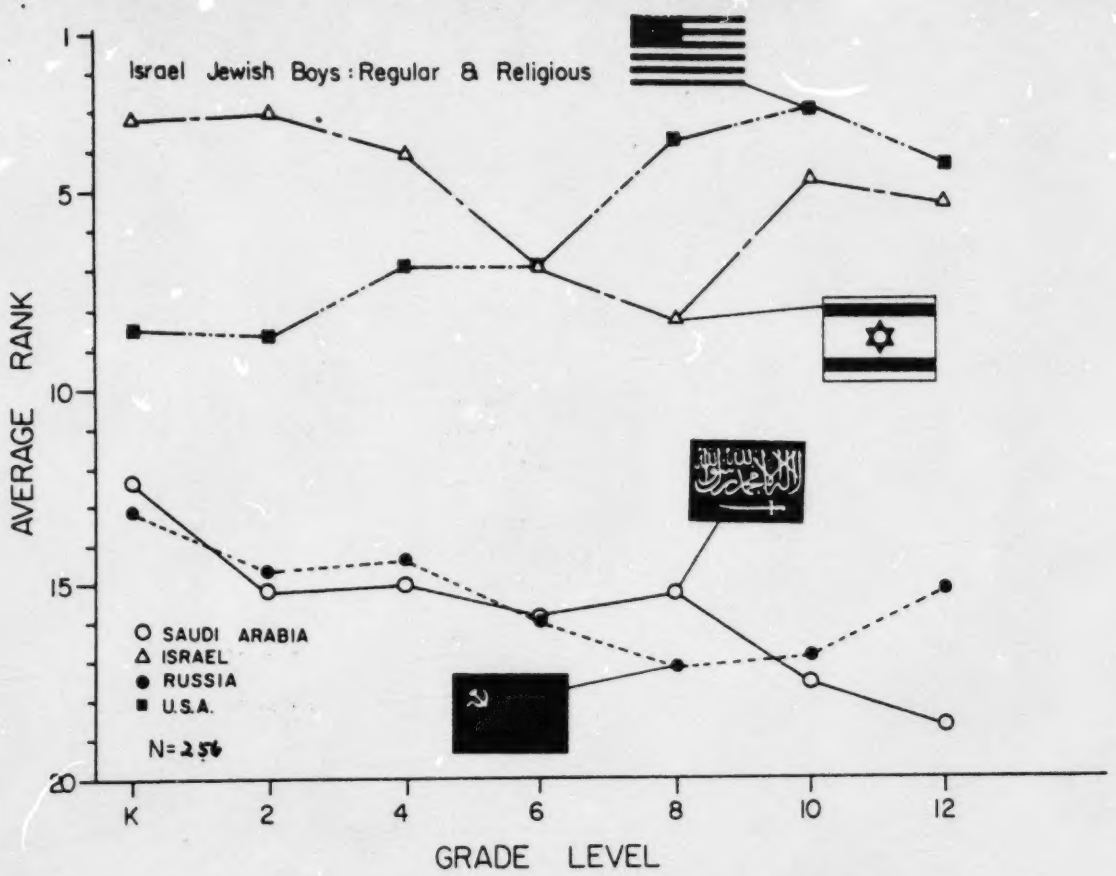

FIG. 3 Average rankings of Jewish boys

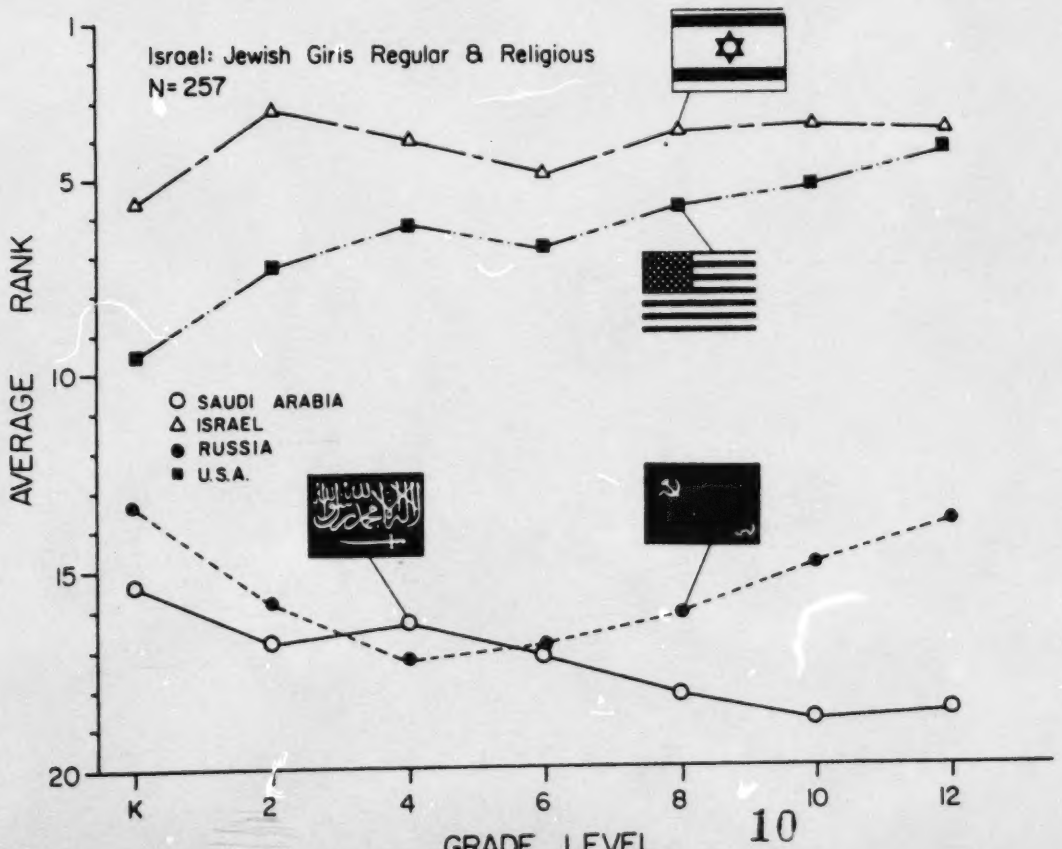

FIG. 4 Average rankings of Jewish girls

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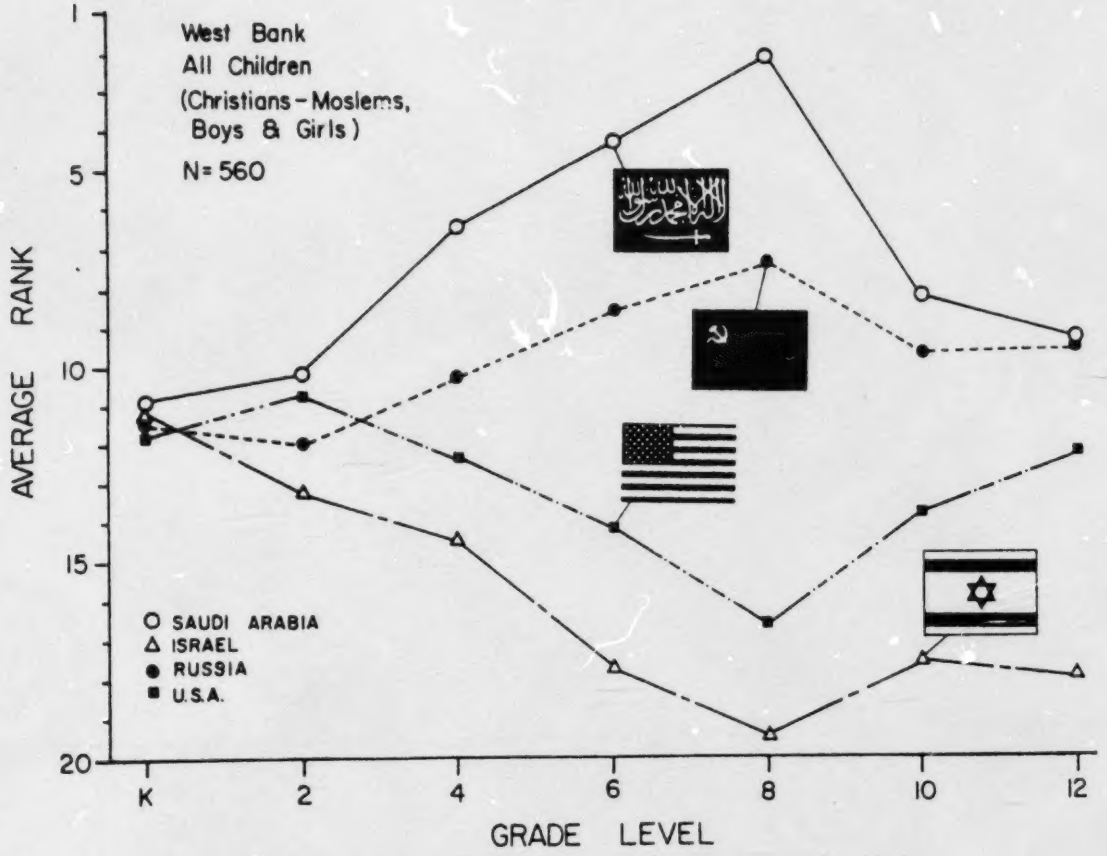

FIG. 5 Average rankings of West Bank children.

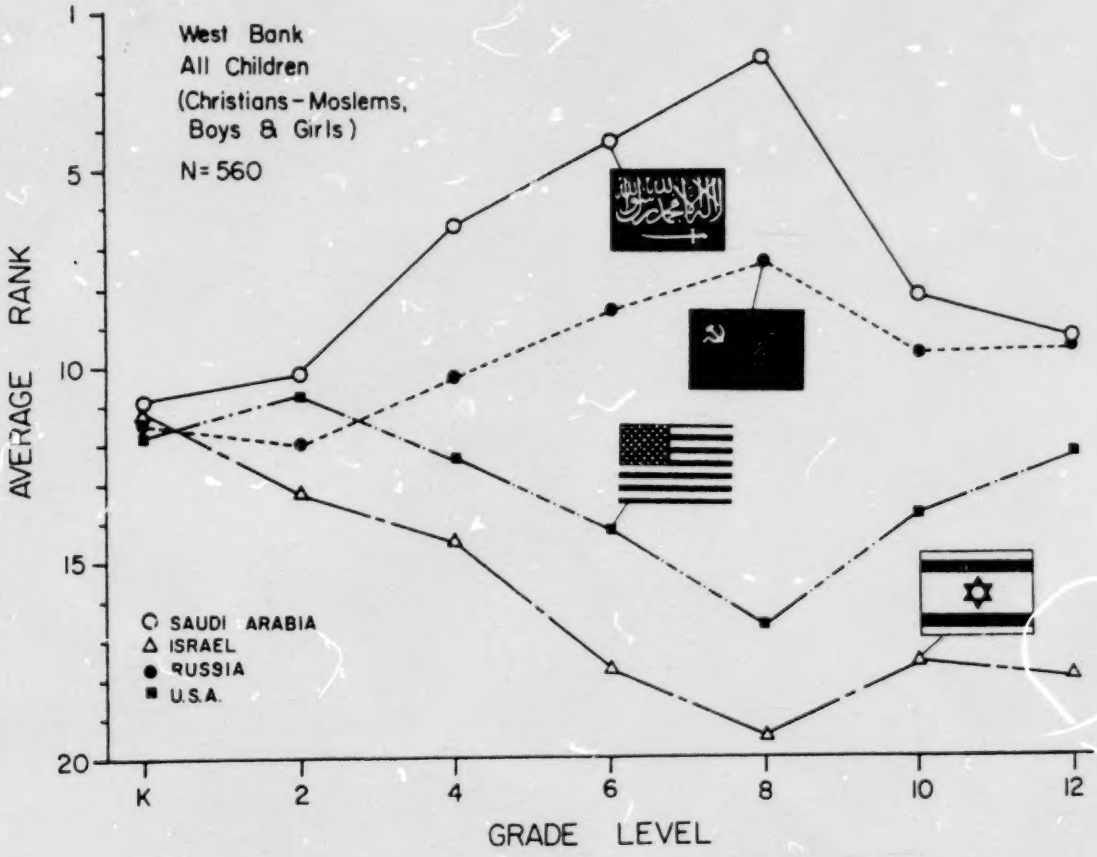

FIG. 5. Average rankings of West Bank children

boys, and girls). Averages which differ by two units or more are probably statistically significant.

Developmental Patterns

There were two major dimensions observed with the different groups in their rankings of the flags: (1) differentiation grade level, and (2) stability of the choices once developed. Early differentiation refers to a group in which most children tended to make clearly different responses to the key flags at the kindergarten level; later differentiation that clearly discriminatory patterns were not observed until the second grade.

Stability refers to the trend, once established, tending to remain relatively constant, that is, the rank for a key flag remaining relatively at the same level through high school.

There were four patterns observed among the six respondent groups. These are shown in Table 1. These are: (1) Early Differentiation and Low Stability (Israeli Christian Arabs),

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Please insert Table 1 about here

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(2) Early Differentiation and High Stability (all Jews), (3) Later Differentiation and Low Stability (Israeli Moslems), and (4) Later Differentiation and High Stability (all West Bank Arabs).

Mirror-image

The mirror-image concept is clearly shown in comparing the preferences of the Jewish children to those of the West

Table 1

Developmental Patterns for Arab and Jewish Children

	Stability: Low	Stability: High
Differentiation Early (Kindergarten)	Israeli Christian Arabs	Jews
Differentiation Later (Grade 2)	Israeli Moslems	West Bank Arabs

Bank. What the Jewish children were for: Israel and the U.S., the Arab children were against; what the Jewish children were against, Saudi Arabia and Russia, the Arab children were for. These patterns would appear reflective of the current political situation.

Jewish Boys and Girls

Examination of Figures 3 and 4 may appear puzzling at first. Jewish Boys in Grades 8, 10, and 12 rated the U.S. flag higher than that of Israel. This difference is significant at the .001 level using the sign test as described by Siegel (1956, pp. 68-75).

Discussion

The results of this investigation seem to show clearly that political attitudes in the Middle East can be measured by a projective instrument such as the flag scale. In general, the results confirm what experienced observers might have predicted about high school students and the adult population at large. However, this research seems to clearly point out that these political attitudes are held not only by teenagers but also by children at the earliest school levels. It seems clear that for Jewish and Israeli Christian children, political socialization begins as early as the kindergarten years and is a good predictor for Jews but a mixed predictor for Christians of subsequent preferences. Political socialization of Israeli Moslems and West Bank children is a bit later, but here early preferences would appear to predict quite well to later years.

The effect of early experience as a powerful factor for later political attitudes tends to be confirmed. One could only hazard a guess that for Jews and West Bank Arabs change of political attitudes in adults would be more difficult since the attitudes were formed so early and held so long. The less stable preference patterns of Israeli Arabs would seem to reflect their marginal man position as described by Smooha (1976) and Smooha & Hofman (1976/77).

Where did the children get their attitudes? It seems unlikely that kindergarten children and second graders have had formal lessons in recognition of all of these flags but it was clear that preferences were observed toward many flags. Post-test interviews with many of the children indicated that even though the names of the country represented by a flag was not known, there were, nevertheless, strong reactions of attraction and repulsion at a conscious but preverbal level. The answer to the question of where the attitude originates must lie in the total culture around the children--parents, older siblings, teachers, television, movies, and newspapers. Children in Israel (and the West Bank) probably absorb a great deal about international events since the Middle East is constantly at the forefront of world news. Children probably also mirror the values and attitudes of their parents.

Some question might arise concerning the apparent shifts in attitudes of Arab children in Israel at the high school level. This is possibly accounted for by the type of sample drawn.

There may have been a selective factor in that there were proportionately fewer Arab children in school after Grade 9. Local observers explained that in the districts interviewed most Arab children were working after Grade 9, many after Grade 8. Possibly there would have been less of a shift in the attitudes if a better sampling of the age group represented by these grade levels had been obtained.

Examination of the data of the Arab children in Israel showed that sex differences were slight. This was true within the Christian and within the Moslem group. There were, however, significant variations between the two religious groups. This leads to the conclusion that for the Arab children in Israel religious affiliation is a more dominant factor than sex differences.

For the Jewish children the patterns were somewhat different. There were sex differences but, interestingly, it was possible to combine the non-Orthodox children with the Orthodox. This was true for both sexes. It would appear then that for Jewish children political attitudes are not related to religiosity, but more to sex differences.

This sex difference is highlighted in the preference by Jewish boys of the U.S. flag over the Israeli in Grades 8, 10, and 12. Previous investigations in the United States and Canada showed that youth generally preferred the flags of their own country. Why the difference in Israel? A possible explanation is that Israeli Jewish boys identify with the United States as

being more glamorous in terms of vocational, educational, and social opportunity. But why would girls be more patriotic than boys? Girls have traditionally been more conservative on patriotism than boys. Further, going to the United States may appear to be more in the realm of possibility for Israeli males than girls. One sees more Israeli young men attending university in America than young women.

Work with the flag scale as a projective instrument leads to the conclusion that basic patterns of political socialization can be identified in many children as early as kindergarten, in most children by Grade 2. There was clear evidence that Jewish Israeli children and West Bank Arab children hold views that are mirror-images of each other. The data also suggest that for Jewish males the U. S. holds especially strong attraction.

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Footnote

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